

Amendments to the Claims:

Please cancel claims 1-13 as presented in the underlying International Application No. PCT/DE2003/002199.

Please add new claims 14-28 as indicated in the listing of claims below.

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1-13 (cancelled)

Claim 14 (new): A method for starting a gas generation system for generating a hydrogen-containing gas for operating a fuel cell, wherein the system includes at least one converting device configured to convert starting substances into the hydrogen-containing gas, at least one conditioning device configured to condition at least some of the starting substances, at least one removal device configured to remove undesirable gas constituents from the hydrogen-containing gas, and a starting burner, the method comprising:

in a first step, burning at least one fuel in the starting burner so as to from hot exhaust gases, heating the conditioning device using the hot exhaust gases, using a residual heat from the hot exhaust gases to heat at least one further component, and electrically heating the at least one converting device;

in a second step, adding starting substances at an initial quantitative ratio with respect to one another to respective components of the devices after a starting temperature has been reached; and

in a third step, continuously changing the quantitative ratio from the initial quantitative ratio toward an operational quantitative ratio.

Claim 15 (new): The method as recited in claim 14, wherein the starting burner includes a porous burner.

Claim 16 (new): The method as recited in claim 14, wherein the starting substances include water (H_2O), an oxygen-containing medium (O_2) and a hydrocarbon-containing compound (C_nH_m), and wherein the at least one fuel includes the hydrocarbon-containing compound (C_nH_m).

Claim 17 (new): The method as recited in claim 16, wherein the hydrocarbon-containing compound (C_nH_m) is at least partially evaporated using electrical energy during the second method step.

Claim 18 (new): The method as recited in claim 16, wherein in the at least one conditioning device, the water (H_2O) is heated and evaporated and at least some of the oxygen-containing medium (O_2) is heated.

Claim 19 (new): The method as recited in claim 14, wherein the at least one further component includes a hydrogen separation module including at least one membrane selectively permeable to hydrogen.

Claim 20 (new): The method as recited in claim 19, wherein the hydrogen separation module functions as a gas purification device.

Claim 21 (new): The method as recited in claim 19, wherein the at least one further component includes a heat exchanger of a cooling circuit.

Claim 22 (new): The method as recited in claim 21, wherein the residual heat is used to heat the hydrogen separation module first and then the cooling circuit.

Claim 23 (new): The method as recited in claim 21, wherein the cooling circuit heats the fuel cell.

Claim 24 (new): The method as recited in claim 21, wherein the cooling circuit heats a selective oxidation stage.

Claim 25 (new): The method as recited in claim 14, wherein the at least one converting device includes an autothermal reformer and at least one shift stage disposed downstream of the autothermal reformer.

Claim 26 (new): The method as recited in claim 25, wherein carbon monoxide (CO) and hydrogen (H₂) exit from the autothermal reformer and wherein at least some of the carbon monoxide (CO) and hydrogen (H₂) exiting from the autothermal reformer is burnt with the oxygen-containing medium (O₂) during the second step so as to further heat the at least one shift stage.

Claim 27 (new): The method as recited in claim 14, further comprising, during an initial stage of the second step, passing at least some of a gas generated in the at least one converting device through a bypass around at least one of the fuel cell and the at least one removal device, and feeding the gas directly to a catalytic burner.

Claim 28 (new): The method as recited in claim 27, further comprising delivering energy for operating the conditioning device from the catalytic burner.